



In this issue, we dig deeper on the implication of claims against vaccines and testing centers. We also provide resources and suggestions on what humanitarians can do.

Two rumors from social media are featured this week.

First, a claim said that COVID-19 vaccine has microchip and that a US business magnate is the one developing them. Second, a rumor jokingly said that closing the testing centers is the way to solve the pandemic.

As of November 10, 2020, there are a total of 2,148 cases in BARMM. Maguindanao has 296 active cases, the highest in the region. Lanao del Sur, including Marawi City, will be under General Community Quarantine from November 1-30, 2020, while the rest of the region will remain under Modified General Community Quarantine.

Salig Bangsamoro (Trust Bangsamoro) is Rooted in Trust Philippines' biweekly rumor bulletin for humanitarians. Rooted in Trust is a global and local humanitarian response run by Internews to fight the spread of rumors on COVID-19. In the Philippines, the focus is on the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

To learn more about how we collect and analyze rumors, check out [humanitarian bulletin issue #3](#)



COVID-19 SITUATION IN BARMM

How we do it: The rumors in this bulletin were collected by the Coalition of Moro Youth Movement and the Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services (IDEALS).

There were 54 feedback data collected from November 1-15, 2020 from various platforms (Facebook, Twitter, posts, comments, and stories). The selection was based on a risk assessment matrix that accounts for the frequency of the scenario or social media engagements and its potential impact on the community.

what are people saying?



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Click underlined words to check linked articles

VACCINES WITH MICROCHIP; BILL GATES IS BEHIND ALL THIS

*"The vaccine with microchip will soon be released in US. That's why you should not get vaccinated when it becomes available in the Philippines because they'll use a different kind of needle, the kind with a microchip... Tell your loved ones. This is not joke... Bill Gates created the virus and he brought it in China and when it is spread around the world, he will also release the vaccine against the virus... The doctors themselves are saying that vaccine is not good to our body because of chemicals and biochip."
(Male, 46-50 years old)*

This is a conspiracy theory that began early this year in the US. Bill Gates continue to play a central role in global vaccine conversations online—on his credibility and trustworthiness as a public health expert, as well as in conspiracy theories. These false claims may have spread in the Philippines when a Filipino who was based in the US warned a friend not to get vaccinated as it contains a microchip.

Coming from a concerned kababayan, the screenshot of their conversation has widely circulated as a chain message through Facebook posts, chat groups, and even localized videos. It is also good to note that despite numerous fact-checking initiatives by local and international media, this rumor still manages to proliferate.

Misinformation on vaccines have spread like wildfire in recent years.

In 2018, the Philippine government stopped its Dengvaxia immunization campaign due to claims of vaccine-related deaths and corruption. This resulted to a highly politicized investigation, widespread misinformation, and trust in vaccine safety dropping from 82 percent in 2015 to just 21%.

The 2019 resurgence of polio and measles outbreak highlights the impact of anti-vaccine sentiment. Health authorities continue to struggle today with vaccine hesitancy and delays caused by the pandemic in its on-going Measles-Rubella Supplemental Immunization Activity. Rumors that trigger fear and panic lead to stigmatization of healthcare workers. Throughout this pandemic, frontliners experienced threats and social discrimination.

During the Dengvaxia controversy, mothers were driving away healthcare workers, calling them child killers. This speculation may also trigger further distrust of COVID-19 existence, the healthcare system, and the government, especially with people that have anti-west or anti-establishment sentiments. Neglected communities are less likely to be confident in government and the vaccination process.

Lastly, this serves as an early warning of possible rumors that may spread as the government and other institutions share information about COVID-19 vaccine development and immunization plan. As the demand and excitement for the COVID-19 vaccine rises, hoaxes and conspiracy theories continue to spread fear and distrust among people. This may also lead to resurfacing of mis and disinformation from the Dengvaxia controversy era.

what are people saying?

CLOSING TESTING CENTERS IS THE SOLUTION TO COVID-19

"Good news to stop COVID-19! There's already a solution and it is guaranteed that no one will be positive... Philippine Red Cross has started it so others may continue. Just close all the testing center." (Marawi City, Male, 46-60 years old)

Rumor risk level: Medium

Platform: Facebook Reactions: 621
Comments: 49 Shares: 12



WHAT CAN WE DO?

Click underlined words to check linked articles

- Based on the study of [first draft news](#), the key to addressing misinformation on COVID-19 vaccines is to "acknowledge people's uncertainties and fears, rather than dismiss them, and build bridges between health experts and the vaccine hesitant."
- Humanitarian organizations have been key in building bridges among different stakeholders and are experts on information, education, and communication campaigns. Continue working with public health institutions in localizing communications on COVID-19 vaccination, including [how vaccines work](#), to the varying contexts of communities in BARMM.
- Marginalized and geographically isolated communities have been [disproportionately](#) been affected by health misinformation and its impact. [Recognize](#) their anxieties, provide a space to listen to concerns and feedback, and ask for information they need to address data [deficits](#) and avoid oversupply.
- As IDP camp settings are also more vulnerable to community transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases, there is an urgency to promote positive attitudes towards practices that help prevent and detect COVID-19, such as minimum health standards, reporting symptoms, testing, and isolation protocols.
- De-mystify the process of COVID-19 testing and treatment by providing a more [illustrative and participatory approach](#). The [COVID-19 testing communications toolkit](#) provides motivating, clear messages and illustrations that are free to use.
- Collaborate with organizations that provide testing support that can be linked to camps.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

This rumor is related to the issue of Philippine Red Cross (PRC), an organization that conducted [25%](#) of COVID-19 screening in the country, when it decided to [stop](#) its COVID-19 tests that are being charged to the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) on October 14.

The insurance agency failed to pay its increasing debt of P1.1 Billion to PRC. After urgent calls to resume the COVID-19 testing, PRC resumed its COVID-19 testing services on October 28 after PhilHealth paid half of its debt or a total [P600 million](#). Though the rumor is obvious in this rumor, this may add to the growing stigma and mistrust in the healthcare system; especially with PhilHealth being subject of [multiple controversies](#) and allegations of corruption in recent years and throughout the pandemic.

This rumor also reflects views that COVID-19 testing leads to more cases and is responsible for pandemic, and therefore, testing should be discontinued or avoided. Testing stigma has been a trend in rumors collected. This is worrying as this negatively affects all health services across the board.

One of the most vulnerable populations to misinformation are internally displaced people (IDPs), who may [receive](#) mixed information on COVID-19. In Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte alone, [2,954](#) families are staying in transitory sites.

Rumors, mixed with existing anxieties and difficult circumstances, [discourage IDPs](#) to get tested and avail of other key health services. [Social stigma](#) and fear of being isolated in quarantine may encourage concealment of symptoms. This may also stigmatize barangay health emergency response teams (BHERTs) and local health workers who are involved with COVID-19 testing and treatment.

WANT MORE?

We've gathered good practices and relevant resources for further reading.

[Vaccine Misinformation in the Philippines](#)

This case study by First Draft News analyzes the role of social media in spreading vaccine misinformation and panic in the wake of the Dengvaxia politicized controversy.

[Under the surface: COVID-19 vaccine narratives, misinformation, and data deficits on social media](#)

This new study by First Draft News analyses narratives on COVID-19 vaccine and data deficits and oversupply and suggests where we're failing to provide the right information.

[Building confidence in COVID-19 vaccination](#)

Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform explains the complexity and root cause of vaccine hesitancy and provides strategies to guide communicators, health workers, and other stakeholders involved in vaccine development to boost confidence in COVID-19 vaccines.

CONNECT WITH US!

Have you spotted a COVID-19 rumor? [CLICK & SUBMIT HERE.](#)

Join the Mindanao Rumor Management Platform Meeting. For feedback, suggestions and questions, contact Leanne (Humanitarian Liaison Officer) at ylagman@internews.org

